

Group I: Claims 1-7, 10-19 and 21 drawn to a method of making a wettable superabsorbent material;

Group II: Claims 8-9 drawn to a wettable superabsorbent fiber; and

Group III: Claims 20 drawn to a disposable product.

Applicants elect, *with traverse*, Group I, 1-7, 10-19 and 21 drawn to a method of making a wettable superabsorbent material, reserving the right to pursue Claims 8-9 and 20 in a divisional patent application, if necessary.

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the above restriction requirement given that the above groups of claims are so interrelated that prosecution of the claims would not unduly burden the Examiner.

Applicants respectfully submit that each group of claims features a wettable superabsorbent material. Group I is directed to a method of making a permanently wettable superabsorbent material comprising treating the superabsorbent material with a surfactant solution, wherein the surfactant has at least one first functional group reactive with a second functional group of the superabsorbent material and at least one non-reactive and hydrophilic functional group, and wherein the surfactant is applied to the superabsorbent material when the second functional groups on the surface of the superabsorbent material are activated. Group II is directed to a fiber made using this method. Group III is directed to a disposable product having this fiber. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that a search for the method of Group I would necessitate a search of the fiber of Group II and the disposable product of Group III. Thus, Applicants submit that the search and examination of the entire application could be made without serious burden. See MPEP § 803 in which it is stated that "if the search and examination of the entire application can be made without serious burden, the Examiner must examine it on the merits, even though it includes claims to distinct and independent inventions."

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the restriction requirement and examination of claims 1-21 as a single group.

#### Election Requirement

Additionally, the Office Action requires an Election of distinct species of superabsorbent material; surfactant; and solvent. Also, as Group I was elected, the form of the superabsorbent material must also be elected.

In response, Applicants elect ethylene maleic anhydride copolymers as the superabsorbent material; lauryl dimethylamine oxide as the surfactant and isopropanol as the solvent. Additionally, the form of the superabsorbent material would be a fiber. These particular species are taken from Example 1

**II. Conclusion:**

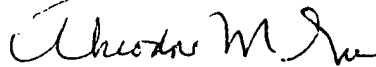
For at least the reasons given above, Applicants submit that a search for the subject matter of claims 1-21 could be made without serious burden to the Examiner. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the restriction/election requirement be withdrawn.

The foregoing is submitted as a full and complete Response to the Restriction Requirement mailed September 21, 2001 and the Communication mailed February 14, 2002, and early and favorable consideration of the claims is requested.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further is necessary in order to place the application in better condition for allowance, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Applicants' representative at the telephone number listed below.

No additional fees are believed due; however, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any deficiency, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 11-0855.

Respectfully submitted,



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